15: Nakane E-5 (1955-1956) 1967 AR7 Khasi AR7

always somewhat outside the family conversation which was centred on the maternal uncle and his sisters, nephews and nieces, by whom I was well taken care of. This is somewhat similar to the situation amongst the Cewa and the Yao of the Central Bantus, which have what Richard calls 'the detachable husband' (Richards, 1950, pp. 233-35, 248), though the parallel is not by any means exact.

There is, therefore, inevitably an element of tension in the relations between the wife's maternal uncle (including parents-in-law) and the husband (son-in-law) and this tension makes the latter's life extremely uncomfortable. This awkward position is well shown in the divorce rate. At Kongton (see List 9), out of 61 couples (house-owners and their spouses), the number of persons who had experience of divorce was 33 (female 15, male 18) and those married more than twice numbered 19 (female 7, male 12). Out of 61 couples, there were only 31 in which neither husband nor wife had been divorced. In my census of Jatinga village, 70 per cent of all divorce cases were marriages to heiresses. In general, the period when divorce occurs more frequently is before a couple get children and after the wife has passed the child-bearing age. A marriage breaks up either through the action of the wife or of the husband, but generally through that of the wife. However, the state of separation which I presently describe is brought about by the husband, though later it results in a divorce from the wife. Divorce does not mean a great catastrophe for a Khasi wife, especially if she is an heiress and her husband's economic contribution is not significant. Moreover, in this society remarriage is as easy for a widow or divorcée, as it is to divorce. In the villages of Sohkynduh and Kongton, the couple who wants to divorce has only to throw a few Annas together in the presence of some witness, usually an elderly man.

In addition to divorce, there are many actual separations of husband and wife, of short or long duration, when the husband runs away from his wife's house to his sister's. Though it does not always end in divorce, considerable number of husbands have a strong tendency to spend most of their time at their sister's house. Khasi women often told me, "I don't know why he does not come back to my place." I have often found the husband staying at his sister's house only a few houses away from his wife's, without any particular reason. They are obliged to see each other every day whether divorced or separated. This kind of ambiguity in the marriage relation seems to have an important correlation with the Khasi social structure, combined with the village endogamy. The man and and wife have grown up together from their childhood in the same village and known each other very well. Hence their psychology cannot clearly distinguish the marriage form as a newly-established independent social relation-